

A Holiday in or near the Western Alps in June-July 1971, with notes on the Lepidoptera

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Synopsis

Visits to the Alandon valley, Geneva (SWITZERLAND), the Aravis range, Haute Savoie, (FRANCE), the Val d'Aoste and southern slopes of Mont Blanc (ITALY), the Col Petit St Bernard (FRANCE) and mountains near the Lac du Bourget, Savoie (FRANCE), are described. A severe infestation of a large *Prunus padus* tree by *Hypomeuta evonymella* Lewis, the capture of *Parnassius phoebus sacerdos* Stichel males, and the occurrence of *Epilobophora sabinata* Hübner in that part of Italy are mentioned in the course of a general narrative. 160 Rhopalocera and Macro-Heterocera are listed at the end.

Narrative

Having made hotel reservations at Col de la Croix Fry near Manigod (Haute Savoie) and at Entrèves, near Courmayeur (Italy, south of Mt. Blanc), my wife and I left Normandy by car on 14th June and drove to Geneva in two days, breaking our journey at Macon, where we left the Autoroute du Sud. At Geneva we stayed with friends and during five days I did no entomology except for a visit to the Alandon valley in the Geneva canton, a favoured spot where a number of southern species, found nowhere else in Switzerland, fly. A prolonged search on 16th July on *Scrophularia canina* showed that *Cucullia* larvae were scarce and half-grown at most. The larva of one species, obviously *C. verbasci* L., was not kept, but photographs were made of the other, believed to be *C. caninae* Ramb. Unfortunately an ichneumon, instead of a moth, emerged in 1972.

Manigod is a small village on a minor road not far from the charming little town of Thônes. It is separated from the winter sports resort of Clusaz by the Col de la Croix Fry, c. 1450 m. Right on the col, quite alone, stands the hotel Les Rosières at which we had booked: it is an alpine-chalet-type of construction of three or four stories, surrounded by wet meadows and forest. For shopping one has to go to Clusaz, Grand Bornand or Thônes itself; at this season we had it to ourselves, and I worked a mixed light on the main current on our hotel balcony the first three nights of our short stay. The weather was fine and calm until our last night, when it rained heavily. For the diurnals, we worked the neighbourhood and towards the higher slopes at 1570 m. of the Aravis range, on foot, or descended by car to the neighbourhood of Thones. The cattle had just moved up to the higher slopes and were the dominant mammal there; but in the forest there

were some clearings where the low vegetation was less monotonously graminaceous, and we took such species as *Heodes tityrus subalpinus* Speyer, *Callophrys rubi* (L.) and *Erebia oeme* Huebn. Larvae of *Malacosoma alpicola* Stgr. were found on *Polygonum bistorta* but later had to be transferred to *Salix viminalis*: the moths emerged in mid-July.

The lower slopes near Thônes were decidedly more productive for diurnals but were too far to work by night. On dry, slatey slopes at La Vacherie, not far from Thônes, a great many butterflies were on the wing on 22nd June, including *Parnassius appolo* (L.), *Papilio machaon* L., *Mesoacidalia agaja* (L.) and *Aricia a. allous* Geyer. This district is a frontier zone between *Pyrgus malvae* (L.) & *malvodes* (E. & Ed.) whence hybrids have been reported, but the only Grizzled Skipper seen was a ♀ *Spialia sertorius* (Hoffm.). I was thus unable to advance further the study of these forms started in 1963-7 as resumed in Wiltshire-de Bros 1966. About eight species of diurnal moth were also seen flying on these slopes, including the charming little *Sterrhia serpentata* Hufn., and *Zygaena loti* D. & S.

Among the many nocturnal species attracted to the mixed light at the Col, was *Athetis pallustris* Hübn., which is common to light on damp high biotopes in the Alps, very different from its few English localities; also two large grey *Cucullia* forms, *C. campanulae* Freyer & *chamomillae* D. & S. and two *Gnophos* species, *G. glaucinarius* Hübn. & *ambiguatus* Dup.

On 25th June we drove towards Chamonix, noticing *Aporia crataegi* L. was common around a petrol station in the gorge at Le Chatelard, drove through the Mont Blanc tunnel and thus easily reached our destination at Entrèves, situated at a height of 1400 m. at the head of the Val d'Aoste, just below the tunnel-exit, with the glaciers and peaks of the Mont Blanc massif towering overhead. We had booked at the Hotel Esso on the main road just below Entrèves village, as the more ordinary hotels at Courmayeur, a little lower down, could not book us for the whole period desired, due to an Italian week-end with a Monday bank holiday, on which enormous crowds appeared all over the place, and the Esso was the only one able to do so.

Being at Entrèves had some advantages, for the situation gave quick access to many splendid localities at both higher and lower elevations; but on the other hand, strong winds blew down the valley every night to the detriment of possible night work. A short descent in the car, however, as far as Verrand or Palusieux, brought one to sheltered and rich habitats where the actinic tube, working on the car battery, was productive.

The highest locality visited was Mt. Pretty, 2200 m., above La Palud; it was the first stop on the cabin-ski-lift to the ski-stations on top, and we went there in the cabin on 2nd July and walked down the steep and rather hair-raising path below

the cables. At the top, near the station "Pavillon", *Erebia triaria* de Prunn. and *E. pluto* de Prunn. were perhaps the most interesting catches; males of *Lasiocampa quercus* (L.) doubtless subsp. *alpina* Freyer, and *Parasemia plantaginis* (L.) f. *matronalis* Freyer were active, the former very elusive, and full-grown larvae of *Malacosoma alpicola* were found too. From 2000 m. downwards the trees began and a greater variety of diurnals was noted, *Papilio machaon alpica* Verity being particularly active and fresh, and *Eumedonia eumedon* (Esper) fewer and less obvious. A ♂ *Euchloe ausonia* Hübner was taken together with a ♀ *Anthocharis cardamines* (L.) which it was perversely courting.

The highest points accessible by car from Entrèves were the two lateral valleys at the head of the Val d'Aoste, running at the foot of the Mt. Blanc massif, Val Veny westwards, and Val Ferret eastwards. For lepidoptera the latter was more rewarding, with males of *Parnassius phoebus* ssp. *sacerdos* Stichel crossing the road and easy to catch on 3rd July near the golf course at c. 1600 m. On flowery slopes close to La Palud at c. 1500 m. *Maculinea arion obscura* Christ. and *Erebia alberganus* de Prunn were abundant on 26th June. By the roadside above this village at c. 1550 m., an extraordinary sight revealed itself to passing travellers: a large tree of *Prunus padus* severely affected by larvae of *Hypomeguta evonymella* Lewis. It was some thirty feet high and entirely encased in a mummy-like white shroud with dangling festoons of desperate larvae trying to find further food. A few of these had spread their webs to bushes at the tree's foot; but these, not being *Prunus padus*, were not to their taste and hardly nibbled. A few larvae were taken as samples and the six imagines hatched between 18th and 22nd July. At 1700 m. in the Val Ferret *Pieris napi bryoniae* Hübn., *Pyrgus malvoides* El. & Ed., *Aricia a. allous* Geyer and *Eumedonia eumedon* (Esper) were among the many diurnals taken, and *Lasinommata petropolitana* (F.), mostly in poor condition, was common from Entrèves itself up to 2000 m. *E. alberganus* was found equally commonly, below Courmayeur at 1200 to 1500 m.

In the Val d'Aoste itself *Parnassius apollo* was amazingly common at 1100-1200 m.: and not very far from Aosta itself, at about 740 m., the fine arge 5-spotted *Zygaena transalpina* race *italica* Dz. was flying with an assortment of "fritillaries". *Aricia agestis* D. & S. and *Lasiommata maera* (L.) As for night work in the Val d'Aoste below Courmayeur, light on 29th June at c. 1200 m. near the woods of Verrand was quite attractive, producing *inter alia* *Agrotis simplonia* Geyer, *Tethea* or F., and *Auchmis comma* D. & S.; but the night of 3rd July at c. 1100 m. between woods, cultivation and a motor-road near Palusieux was better: *Thetidia smaragdaria* (F.) and *Sterrha humiliata* Hufn. were flying commonly at dusk and sunset respectively, and after dark the actinic tube attracted many species, notably *Epilobophora sabinata* Huebner, which

I have not seen anywhere mentioned from Italy though it is known from its special middle height habitats in Austria, Switzerland and France; only one example of it appeared; those that came to light commonly included *Pharetra euphorbiae* D. & S., *Rhodostrophia calabra* Pat., and *Catascia serotinaria* D. & S.; to light but less commonly also came *Dyspessa ulula* Borkh., *Hadena uteago* D. & S., *Pachetra sagittifera* Hufn., etc.

On 5th July we said goodbye to Italy and drove over the Petit St Bernard Col into the Haue Savoie. The weather inclined to be cloudy with light showers; but a few catches were made on the French side of the Col. The first such locality was at 2050 m., and *Calostigia lineolata* F. (= *turbata* Huebn) was abundant in the shelter of rocks on the roadside: on the grassy slopes at this point, when the sun appeared, *Colias palaeno europome* Esper and *Psolos quadrifaria* Sulz. and males of *Parasemia plantaginis* (L.) were caught, the latter being the typical form with less black hind-wings than those taken a few days before on the slopes of Mont Blanc. Lower down, at 1775 m., just below the tree-line, *Erebia alberganus* appeared again flying in meadows, but the sunlight was short-lived, so we pushed on towards our destination at the Lac du Bourget, in the more westerly mountains of the Savoy. A tremendous storm burst upon us near Chambéry, causing serious floods and damage higher up, but not impeding us. We stayed two nights in the hotel we had selected from the Michelin Guide, namely "Ombremont" on the steep western shores of the lake. It was comfortable and beautifully situated, but our first night's sleep was ruined by a wedding-party. This was just a pause on our homeward journey; but as 6th July was fine we sampled the diurnal lepidoptera of the Mt. de la Chavaz, and here too we found the Fritillaries abundant at c. 1100 m. We did no night work, beyond catching a Noctuid at our hotel, being too far from the Chatagne marshes, which would probably have provided the most interesting assortment of moths in the Savoy, as Mons. C. Dufay's recent work there has shown.

On the 7th July we drove through some magnificent gorges, joined the Autoroute du Sud near Macon, and broke our journey at the picturesque town of Avallon. We arrived home in Normandy on 8th July.

References

- Dufay, C., (1969i). *Herminia gryphalis* H.S., espèce nouvelle pour la France. *Alexandor* **6**, 5-6.
- Dufay, C., (1969ii). *Archanara neurica* Hb., espèce nouvelle pour la faune française. *Alexandor* **6**, 151-155.
- Wiltshire, E. P. & de Bros, E., (1966). *Pyrgus malvae* L. et malvoïdes El. & Ed., y-a-t-il une zone de contact à la frontière Vaudoise en Suisse? (*Mitt ent. Ges. Basel*, **16**, 4-6, 110-122.

LIST IF LEPIDOPTERA TAKEN OR OBSERVED, JUNE-JULY
1971 IN OR NEAR WESTERN ALPS

Abbreviations for localities

- AL. Alandon, Genève, 450 m., SWITZERLAND.
 Ch. Chatelard, near Chamonix, 700 m., Hte Savoie, FRANCE.
 Col C. Col Croix Fry, Manigod, 1450 m., Savoie, FRANCE.
 Col P. Col Petit Saint Bernard, 250 m., Hte Savoie, FRANCE.
 En. Above Entrèves, especially Val Ferret, 1500-2000 m., south of Mont Blanc, ITALY.
 On. Ontex, Mt. Chavaz, 1100 m., near Bourget du Lac, FRANCE.
 P.Bo. Petit Bornand, Bargy chain, 700 m., Hte Savoie, FRANCE.
 Ros. Rosières, near Col P., 1775 m., Hte Savoie, FRANCE.
 Tho. Lac Vacherie, near Thônes, 700 m., Hte Savoie, FRANCE.
 Val. Below Courmayeur, Val d'Aoste, 740-1200 m., particularly Palusieux, 1100 m., ITALY.
 [] seen and identified but not taken.

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| [<i>Papilio machaon</i> (L.) (subsp. ?)
Col C., Tho.] | <i>Cucullia chamomillae</i> D. & S.
Col C. |
| <i>Parnassius apollo</i> (L.) Val
<i>phoebus</i> (F.) subsp. <i>sacerdos</i> Stichel En. | <i>campanulae</i> Freyer Col. C.
(?) <i>caninae</i> Freyer larvae Al.
[<i>verbasci</i> (L.) larvae Al.] |
| [<i>Aporia crataegi</i> (L.) Ch., En., Tho., Val.] | <i>Blepharita adusta</i> Esp. Col C., Val. |
| [<i>Pieris brassicae</i> (L.) En.]
<i>napi</i> (L.) ssp. ? Col C. ssp.
<i>bryoniae</i> Hübn. En., Col P. | <i>Apatele psi</i> (L.) Col C.
<i>Pharetra euphorbiae</i> D. & S. Col C., Val. |
| <i>Euchloe ausonia</i> Hübn. En. | <i>auricoma</i> D. & S. Col C. |
| <i>Anthocharis cardamines</i> (L.) Al., En., P. Bo. | <i>Hyppa rectilinea</i> Esp. Col C. |
| <i>Colias phicomene</i> Esp. En.
<i>palaeno europome</i> Esp. Col P.
<i>hyale</i> (L.) Col C., En., Tho | <i>Auchmis comma</i> D. & S. Val.
<i>Actinolia hyperici</i> D. & S. Val
<i>Apamea sublustris</i> Esp. Val.
<i>zeta curoi</i> Calb. Val. |
| [<i>Gonepteryx rahmni</i> (L.) On., Val] | <i>sordens</i> Hufn. Col C. |
| <i>Leptidea sinapis</i> (L.) En., On., Val. | <i>Mesapamea secalis</i> (L.) Col C. |
| <i>Limenitis camilla</i> (L.) Al., Val. | <i>Oligia strigilis</i> (L.) Col C., Val.
<i>latruncula</i> D. & S. Col C. |
| <i>Nymphalis polychloros</i> (L.) Val. | <i>Caradrina morpheus</i> Hufn Val. |
| <i>Polygonia c-album</i> (L.) On. | <i>flavirena</i> Guenee Val. |
| <i>Aglais urticae</i> (L.) Col C., Col P., En. | <i>Hoplodrina blanda</i> D. & S. Val.
<i>Athetis pallustris</i> Hübn. Col C. |
| <i>Mesoacidalia aglaja</i> (L.) On., Tho. | <i>Pyrrhia umbra</i> Hufn. Val. |
| <i>Brenthis daphne</i> D. & S. Val.
<i>ino</i> Rott. On. | <i>Jaspidia deceptoria</i> Scop. Tho.
<i>Colocasia coryli</i> (L.) Col C. |

- Clossiana euphrosyne* (L.) Col C., En., P. Bo.
dia (L.) On.
Melitaea phoebe D. & S. Val.
didyma Esp. On., Val.
diamina Lang En, Val.
Mellicta athalia celadussa Fruh. En., On., Tho.
parthenoides Kef. Val.
Euphydryas aurinia debilis Ob. En.
Melanargia galathea (L.) Al., Tho., Val.
Erebia triaria de Prun. En.
medusa (L.) Al.
alberganus de Prun. En., Ros., Val.
oeme Huebn. Col C., Tho.
pluto de Prun (*oreas* Warr.) En.
 [*Maniola jurtina* (L.) Al., On., Val.]
Coenonympha pamphilus (L.) Al. En., Ros.
arcania (L.) En., Val.
gardetta de Prun En.
Lasiommata maera (L.) Tho., Val.
petropolitana (F.) En.
Callophrys rubi (L.) Col C., En., Tho.
Heodes virgaureae (L.) Ch.
tityrus subalpinus Speyer Col C., Ros.
Cupido minimus Fuessly Col C., En., Val., P. Bo.
Celastrina argiolus (L.) On.
Maculinea arion obscura Christ. En.
Aricia agestis D. & S. Val.
artaxerxes allous Geyer En., Tho.
Cyaniris semiargus Rott. En., Tho.
Lysandra bellargus Rott. Val.
Polyommatus icarus (L.) Val.
Pyrgus malvoides El. & Ed. Col P., En.
Spialia sertorius Hoffm. Tho.
Erynnis tages (L.) Col C., En.
Ochlodes venatum Br. & G. Val.
Pergesa porcellus (L.) Col C.
- Plusia chrysitis* (L.) Col C.
 [*Autographa gamma* (L.) Val.]
Chryspidia bractea (D. & S.) Col C.
Autographa v-aureum Hübn Col C.
Phytometra viridaria Clerck Col C.
Ectypa glyphica (L.) Col C.
Herminia tentacularia (L.) P. Bo.
Spargania luctuata D. & S. Col C., En.
Entephria caesiata D. & S. Col C.
cyanata Hübn. Col C.
Calostigia aptata Hübn. En.
laetaria Lah. En.
Calostigia lineolata F. (= *turbata* Hübn.) Col C., Col P.
Lampropteryx suffumata D. & S. Col C.
Diactinia silaceata D. & S. Col C.
Chloroclysta miata (L.) Col C.
citrata (L.) Col C.
Cidaria fulvata Forster Val.
Thera obeliscata Hueb. Col C.
Hydriomena coeruleata F. Col C., Val.
Horisme calligraphata H.-S. En.
Pareulype berberata D. & S. Val.
Rheumaptera hastata (L.) Col C.
Euiithecia venosata F. Col C. Val.
lariciata Freyer, Val.
vulgata Haw., Val.
 (?) *subumbrata* D. & S., Val.
Perizoma albulata D. & S. Col C., En.
Xanthorhoe spadicearia D. & S. Col C., Val.
incursata Huebn. Col C.
Catarhoe cucullata (Hufn) Col C.
Epirrhoe tristata (L.) Col C., En.
molluginata Huebn. Col C., En.
galiata D. & S. Val.
Anaitis praeformata Huebn. Col C.
Odezia atrata (L.) Val.
Scotopteryx vicinaria Dup.
Epilobophera sabinata Hübn. Val.

- Malacosoma alpicola* Stgr. (larvae) Col C., En.
 [*Lasiocampa quercus* (L.) (?) ssp. *alpina* Freyer En.]
Cerura vinula (L.) Col C.
Clostera curtula (L.) Col C.
Agrotis simplonia Geyer Val. *exclamationis* (L.) Val.
Ochropleura plecta (L.) Col C.
Noctua comes Huebn. On.
Anaplectoides prasina D. & S. Col C.
Hada nana Hufn. Col C., Val.
Polia bombycina Hufn (= *Aplectata advena* D. & S.) Val.
Pachetra sagnittifera Hufn. Col C., Val.
Sideridis evidens Huebn. Val.
Heliophobus reticulata Goeze Val
Mamestra pisi (L.) Col. C. *bi-ren* Goeze (*glauca* Hübn.) Col C., Val.
dysodea D. & S. Val.
Hadena luteago D. & S. Val. *irregularis* Hufn. Val.
Mythimna conigera D. & S. Col C. Val. *comma* (L.) Col C.
Sterrrha humiliata Hufn. Val. *serpentata* Hufn. Tho. *aversata* (L.) Val. *inornata* Haw. Val.
Scopula immorata (L.) Tho. *incanata* (L.) Val.
Rhodostrophia calabra Pat. Val.
Lomaspilis marginata (L.) Col. C.
Semiothisa liturata Clerck Col C. *clathrata* (L.) Col C. [En.]
Selenia bilunaria Esp. Col C.
Gonodontis bidentata Clerck Col C.
Alcis repandata (L.) Col C., Val.
Gnophos ambiguatus Dup Col C. *glaucinarius* Hübn. Col C. Val.
Catascia serotinarina D. & S. Val.
Psolos quadrifaria Sulzer Col P.
Thetidia smaragdaria (Fab) Val.
Eilema complana (L.) (larva) Val.
Parasemia plantaginis (L.) f. typ. Col P. *f. matronalis* Frr En.
Diacrisia sannio (L.) Tho.
Spilosoma lucricipeda (L.) Col C. *lutea* Hufn. Col C.
Zygaena transalpina Esp. ssp *italica* Dziurz. Val.
Dypessa ulula Borkh. Val.
Hepialus humuli L. Col C.
Hypomeuta evonymella Lewis En

On the Nest of *Halictus (Seladonia) jucundus komensis* Cockerell (Hymenoptera : Apoidea, Andrenidae)

G. R. CUNNINGHAM—VAN SOMEREN

Synopsis

A description, with figure, is given of the nest, cells and contents of the Social Bee *Halictus (Seladonia) jucundus komensis* Cockerell from Karen near Nairobi, Kenya.

Introduction

Halictus (Seladonia) jucundus Smith is widespread in Africa from the Cape to Southern Rhodesia and Zanzibar. Cockerell (1937). Cockerell (1939) described the subspecies *komensis* from the east end of Kome Island, North West